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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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Introduction

1. While July had been a "honeymoon" period for the new Government, and uncertainties or weaknesses in the new Government were overlooked, August saw this come to a gradual end and a definite "hardening" of attitudes by extremists could be noticed. Compounding the difficulties of the new Government was a marked increase in activities by gangsters who frequently used the initials of the Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR) to cover their activities. Also notable was an upsurge of activity by extremist groups on the Southern coast of Guatemala. While much of this was in the realm of propaganda, there were a few more meaningful strikes, such as the assassination of retired Col. Pedro Cardona y Cardona on his farm near Escuintla.

2. Most of the initiatives in this period came from the extremists, which consequently cast the Government in an unfavorable light and made it the object of "do-nothing" accusations. As a result, an unsettled political atmosphere could be noted in Guatemala, particularly as the month drew to a close. Young Army officers

indicated to their chiefs that they thought there should be more action against extremists (this was particularly noticed following a gunfight in Martha's Bar, a local establishment offering liquor and B-girls, in which two young Army officers and one terrorist were killed)(see GUATEMALA 957, 1052, 1098). Along with this unrest in the Army, the far Right made its presence felt via its own terrorist organization, La Mano Blanca, which began distributing propaganda and gave other indications that it might be willing to take matters into its own hands and start acting directly against leftists. It was even accused of preparing an "invasion" of

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Guatemala; while this is somewhat far-fetched, there is no doubt that some elements of the extreme right were willing to foment trouble [REDACTED] GUATEMALA 1053). 31/12

Extremist Activities in Rural Areas

3. Perhaps the most significant events re internal security occurred outside Guatemala City, and one contributing factor was the GOG's land reform program (GUATEMALA 675). According to this, the GOG agreed to transform its national fincas (farms) into cooperatives for the benefit of the campesinos residing thereon. This immediately aroused expectations that the Government was going to initiate a much larger and more meaningful program, with two results: (1) the campesinos themselves, in their enthusiasm, became impatient and in certain instances were allegedly incited to try to seize land belonging to private landowners, and (2) the landowners themselves became jittery and fearful that land reform could get out of hand. This in turn was reflected in subtle pressure on the army and right wing groups to demand action against extremists. The GOG was put on the defensive, and was forced to issue a statement (GUATEMALA 1053), through the Minister of Interior, that it was not lax in its counter-subversive efforts (followed by a Presidential speech in September--GUATEMALA 1265). The controlling Partido Revolucionario (PR) also issued a statement reiterating its respect for private property, and saying that the GOG had more than enough nationally-owned lands to distribute to the peasantry and, therefore, would concentrate on these in its land reform program (GUATEMALA 1053). Although these moves may have taken the pressure off the GOG for the moment, the issue remains, and a combination of impatient campesinos, at a time when the GOG preaches patience, and of suspicious landowners, could cause problems in the future unless the GOG acts decisively and effectively.

4. Also, but perhaps less clearly defined, extreme leftist activity could be noted, particularly on the southern coast. Undoubtedly some of these elements were behind the incitements to campesinos to seize land directly; but additionally, extremist publications were circulated relatively widely, and campaigns of intimidation were noted. In areas where Peace Corps Volunteers are working, some of their Guatemalan colleagues have received threats, and signs have been noted urging the Volunteers' departure (Afuera los Yankis).

5. With respect to actual terrorism, the most dramatic was the aforementioned assassination of Col. Pedro Cardona y Cardona. This was accomplished by several armed and uniformed men who blocked his jeep as he was driving through his fincas. Perhaps the most significant factor in the assassination was the simple fact that the terrorists had good information on when the Colonel would be where, indicating that they have informers willing to help them.

A Hardening of Attitudes

5. Although it was apparent much earlier that the extreme leftists had rejected peace overtures and did not intend to give up their goals of violent revolution,

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the "die was cast" in August, when the amnesty offer of the new Government went unanswered other than by various statements issued by the extremists rejecting its terms. The GOG, therefore, had little it could do except say that it would use all its resources to combat extremism (particularly in the September speech of the President).

6. The extremists also resumed terrorist action, which had been suspended some time before the Presidential inauguration. Several assassinations occurred in the traditional guerrilla country, notably that of Daniel Vanegas (GUATEMALA 1053), the MLN coordinator in Zacapa, as well as that of Col. Manuel Orellana, a long time MLN supporter and finquero in that region. While no great public sympathy was aroused for the assassinated, since generally speaking they had rather colored pasts and were not what one would call outstanding citizens, their deaths did arouse the ire of the Right, and did show to all that the FAR was still in business. Cries were immediately heard, amplified by a number of FAR threats to political and civic leaders, that the present GOG was ineffective and needed more energy in providing protection to the citizenry.

7. Adding to these difficulties were common criminal acts. The most spectacular was the kidnapping of Antonio Delgado Wyld, a Guatemalan employee of ROCAP (GUATEMALA 762). His family was informed that the FAR had committed the kidnapping, and a large ransom was demanded. Fortunately, in this case, the police received a tip-off which it followed up, and soon it rescued Delgado and captured the criminals, who turned out to be ordinary thugs (GUATEMALA 804). There were also a number of hold-ups and extortion efforts which were undoubtedly traceable to common criminals rather than politically motivated extremists.

The Army

8. While the Army high command remained loyal to the GOG and in fact continued to work well with it, problems emerged on a different level within the Army. Most troublesome were junior officers, who clamored for action against the guerrillas and leftist terrorists. While they had been provoked by the gunfight at Martha's Bar, it was also apparent that on general principle they felt the GOG was acting too cautiously and too slowly in combatting extremists. Taking matters into their own hands, several impromptu terrorist attacks could actually be attributed to junior officers acting on their own. For example, they strafed the homes of several leftists, and disrupted the funeral of the terrorist slain at Martha's Bar.

9. The High Command, and the GOG, reacted wisely and moderately, and undertook a series of sweeps of the Sierra de las Minas with Army troops. While these certainly had as an objective a genuine search for guerrillas, they were also undoubtedly motivated by a desire to keep young officers busy. This policy

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seemed successful, and junior officer complaints died down; however, again the significant point is that such discontent could jell so rapidly.

The Right

10. Perhaps the most unfortunate development to occur was the recrudescence of extreme rightist activity. [REDACTED] B-1
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[REDACTED] It should be recalled that in July (see A-98), the MLN actually made several peace moves as it appeared willing to cooperate with the new Government and act as a genuine political, legal opposition. However, renewed rightist activity culminated in rumors assiduously cultivated by the FAR that the extreme right was actually planning a new "invasion" of Guatemala. These were denied, but undoubtedly many believed them.

11. The PR had not appeared satisfied, or did not seem to care, about the July peace moves of the MLN. [REDACTED] R1

[REDACTED] In any event, at a time when the National Congress should have been devoting its efforts to programs of reform and economic development, the PR suddenly chose to divert the Congress' attention to the removal of the old Liberación slogan from the walls of the National Congress. Not unexpectedly, the MLN reacted strenuously, and from that time on, a distinct hardening of MLN attitudes could be noticed.

12. As if this were not sufficient, the PR continued with its aloofness from the MLN. When an opportunity presented itself to mend political fences by including the MLN in a U.S. cultural exchange program, the PR leadership deliberately ignored the possibility.

13. As a result, it is not surprising that the MLN has tended to revert to a more immoderate political position. While there is no evidence it is directly supporting operations of the Mano Blanca, its failure to reiterate outright opposition to Mano Blanca activities surely give heart to these extremists. Additionally, when several members of the Mano Blanca were captured by police, the GOG was criticized for being so efficient in capturing rightists and bandits, but so inefficient in capturing leftists. It was implied that the GOG simply was not vigorous in pursuing the latter.

Summary of Events in August

14. On August 6, an attempt was made on the life of Cesar Guerra Morales, an under-cover Army G-2 non-com, and an ex-judicial policeman. Although hit by some twenty bullets fired from a passing vehicle, Morales and several bystanders survived.

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- August 10: Antonio Delgado Wyld was kidnapped by criminals.
- August 13: Manuel Orellana Portillo was assassinated near his farm in Zacapa.
- August 15: Judicial policeman Gilberto Flores was killed in a gunfight with bandits (GUATEMALA 814).
- August 19: Ret. Col. Pedro Cardona assassinated.
- August 21: Gunfight at Martha's Bar (GUATEMALA 957).
- August 24: Raul Estrada Lorenzana, Jorge Cordova Molina and Luis Orantes, leaders of the Mano Blanca, captured by police (released early September). (GUATEMALA 984)
- August 25
- 26: Rumors of an invasion by MLN supporters are heard, but denied.
- August 25: MLN coordinator in Zacapa Daniel Vanegas assassinated.
- August 26: A bomb is thrown at the GOG printing office, causing minimal damage.
- August 30: Three arrested in Nueva Concepción and accused of being FAR members. Some weapons, propaganda, and uniforms seized.
- August 30: A former Army Lieutenant killed by ambush on the road to El Salvador.
- August 31: FAR releases its long-held prisoners, Baltazar Morales and Augusto de Leon (GUATEMALA 1123).
- August 31: A gun store in Guatemala City was held up. The 13 of November Movement claims responsibility.
- August 31: A small armed band attacks the Army garrison at Gualan, but is repulsed with no injuries or damage to either side.
- August 15-
- 31: The Army carries out a number of sweeps of the Sierra de las Minas area, but fails to encounter any guerrillas.

Conclusions

15. The trends that developed in August bode ill for peace and tranquility in Guatemala, even though subsequent events in early September (particularly the President's speech) may have some temporary salutary effect. The simple fact that these trends emerged, that the extreme Right reflected a lack of confidence

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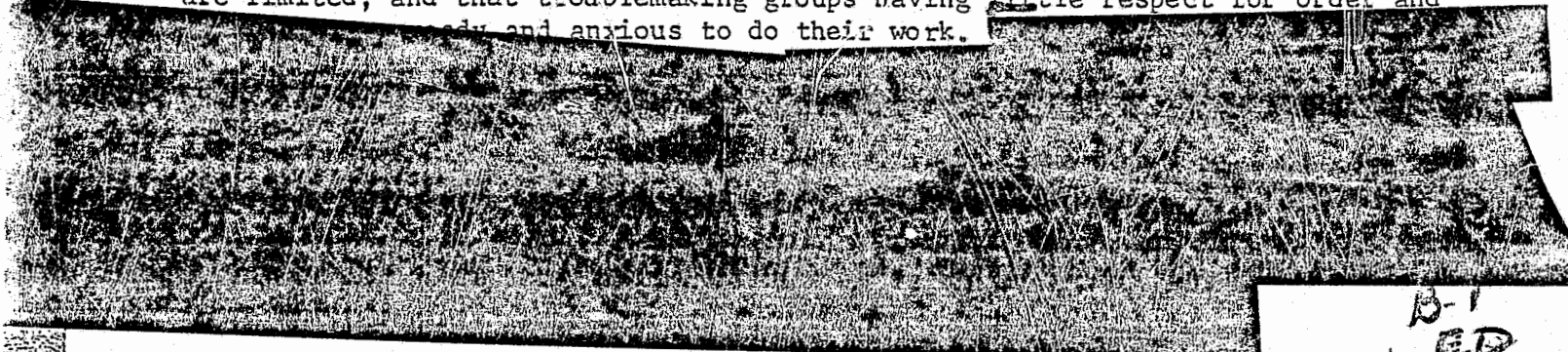
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in the Government and that the extreme Left had no intention of abandoning its struggle against Constitutional Government, was significant and disappointing, particularly so soon after the installation of the new Government. Their emergence underlines the fact that the task of the GOG is enormous, that its resources are limited, and that troublemaking groups having little respect for order and



ready and anxious to do their work.

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